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The Guardian

Critics 'gunning for Oxfam' over Haiti, claims charity boss

Chief executive says sorry for failings, but questions motives of some attackers

**Decca Aitkenhead
Peter Beaumont**

The chief executive of Oxfam has hit back at the storm of criticism surrounding the charity's sexual exploitation scandal in Haiti, claiming attacks on the organisation are "out of proportion to the level of culpability".

In an interview with the Guardian, Mark Goldring repeated his apology for Oxfam's failings and acknowledged major reforms were needed. But warning the controversy had affected vital donations, he accused critics of "gunning" for the charity and said some had an anti-aid agenda.

"The intensity and the ferocity of the attack makes you wonder, what did we do?" he said. "We murdered babies in their cots? Certainly, the scale and the intensity of the attacks feels out of proportion to the level of culpability. I struggle to understand it. You think, 'My God, there's something going on

there.'" Goldring acknowledged his comments could be used to inflict more damage, saying: "Anything we say is being manipulated ... even apologies only make matters worse."

The interview followed a promise by Oxfam to publish a 2011 internal investigation into staff involved in sexual and other misconduct in Haiti as soon as possible. It said the names of the men involved had already been shared with the Haitian authorities.

The head of Oxfam International, Winnie Byanyima, announced a reform plan - including an independent commission to review culture and practices - and said the incidents were a "stain ... that will shame us for years". In a series of tweets yesterday, Oxfam laid out other reforms, including new funding for safeguarding and a crack-down on references for former staff.

Oxfam has sought to persuade the public that it is taking responsibility for what went wrong with management and safeguarding. On Thursday, Goldring published an open letter of apology over misconduct in Haiti and Chad, saying: "I know that this apology is by no means enough but I want to offer it unreservedly ... I am so sorry."

Goldring, who said he had apologised to the Haitian ambassador on Thursday, is to visit the country soon to explore ways to make practical restitution. But he suggested Oxfam was a whipping boy in some respects. He said attempts to explain decisions taken over the departure of Roland van Hauwermeiren, **4**



'That was a bit of a rollercoaster and it hasn't really sunk in yet'
Britain's first medal winner, Dom Parsons
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**'What did we do?
We murdered babies
in their cots?'**

Mark Goldring
• Chief executive of Oxfam

